

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6252

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Judiciary, January 22, 2008

**Title:** An act relating to changing the number of district court judges.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the number of district court judges in Cowlitz county.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hatfield and Zarelli; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Judiciary: 1/16/08, 1/22/08 [DP].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kline, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; McCaslin, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Hargrove, McDermott, Roach and Weinstein.

**Staff:** Robert Kay (786-7405)

**Background:** The Legislature sets by statute the number of district court judges in each county. There are currently two district court judges in Cowlitz County. The state and the counties share the costs of the district courts. Periodically, the Administrative Office of the Courts does a workload analysis of the superior courts to determine if additional judicial positions are needed.

**Summary of Bill:** The number of district judges in Cowlitz County is increased to three. The additional judicial position created by this act becomes effective only if the legislative authority of Cowlitz County documents its approval of the additional position and its agreement to pay the expenses of the additional position out of county funds, without reimbursement from the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 10, 2008.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The analysis required by statute to be done by the Administrative Office of the Courts in order to produce sufficient evidence of the need for an additional judge in Cowlitz County District Court has been done, and the analysis indicates

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

that the Cowlitz County court's caseload merits 3.6 judges. Cowlitz County District Court has had two judges since the 1960s. Filings into district court by the prosecuting authorities are increasing, as are citations and arrests by Cowlitz County law enforcement, as the law enforcement agencies have grown in personnel. Also, a new jail has been constructed in Cowlitz County and the District Court is hearing more first and second appearances of incarcerated suspects.

Therefore, the county is justified in requesting of the Legislature that a third judge be added to its district court. There is no state fiscal impact, as the funding for the district court judges comes solely out of the county budget.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Mellani McAleenan, Washington Board for Judicial Administration; Honorable David Koss, Cowlitz County District Court Judge; Delaura Wirkkala, Cowlitz County District Court.